

September 2006

FLN



DISPATCH

*Emerging Lessons From
The Fire Learning Network*

FIRE LEARNING NETWORK A cooperative project of The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service, and the Dept. of the Interior, the network was created in 2002 to catalyze efforts to reduce hazardous fuels across the country. Part of the larger joint program *Restoring Fire-Adapted Ecosystems* that includes fire education and training components, the network operates at both local and national levels to overcome barriers to implementing ecologically appropriate fuels reduction and restoration projects.

<http://tncfire.org/usfln>

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY FIRE INITIATIVE This 20-person team is working to assess, abate and prevent fire-related threats to biodiversity conservation around the world. In the U.S., the Initiative is working with a variety of partners to promote ecologically appropriate fire management, develop and implement science-based planning tools and monitoring techniques, and further fire education and training efforts.

<http://nature.org/fire>



The Nature Conservancy
SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

Fire has shaped and maintained the tallgrass prairie for millennia, but today one rarely encounters fires in the grasslands of the upper Midwest. Exceptions include some nature preserves and wildlife refuges, but the vast majority of intact grassland in this region is owned and managed by ranchers who have limited awareness of or access to prescribed burning. A dedicated group representing private, state and federal interests in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota is working to change this.

The Prairie Coteau Habitat Partnership was formed in 2004 and has already garnered more than \$200,000 in grants to hire a prescribed fire crew to work on private lands across the 2.3-million-acre Prairie Coteau region. These funds are being provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Conservation Innovation Grant Program and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Private



Mowing a fire break in preparation for a prescribed burn in western Minnesota.

—Photo by Pete Bauman

PRAIRIE COTEAU HABITAT PARTNERSHIP TEAM

- Day County Conservation District
- Northern Prairies Land Trust
- Pheasants Forever
- South Dakota Grasslands Coalition
- South Dakota Wildland Fire Suppression
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks
- The Nature Conservancy
- Private landowners

For more information, contact Pete Bauman at 605-874-8517 or pbauman@tnc.org.

Stewardship Grant Program. Internal advocacy by the NRCS and USFWS Prairie Coteau partners was invaluable in securing the grants.

The Partnership burned portions of five privately owned sites totaling more than 500 acres in 2005. Three more properties were added in 2006, when 431 acres were treated. Thanks to an effective public outreach effort, upwards of 70 livestock producers are now interested in utilizing the new crew to test the effectiveness of prescribed fire on their lands. The Prairie Coteau fire crew will not charge ranchers for their services during the initial stages of what the Partnership expects to be a sustained effort.

Each treatment area will be monitored, and different fire-grazing cycles will be applied, depending upon the condition of the treatment area and the goals of the landowner. The Partnership's overall objectives are to conserve biodiversity, improve management practices on lands that are currently being managed to improve native species habitat, increase

the number of private landowners using ecologically sound prescribed fire and grazing, and model appropriate disturbance regimes while exploring new markets for participating landowners.

The Prairie Coteau Habitat Partnership coalesced when the **Great Plains Fire Learning Network** got underway, and the Network has tangibly contributed to the Partnership's efforts. "It was difficult, but the things that we learned completing assignments for the Great Plains Network workshops were really, really valuable," said Pete Bauman, land steward for The Nature Conservancy in South Dakota.

GET INVOLVED!

If you're interested in participating in a regional or national level meeting, or just learning more:

- Browse the FLN Web site
<http://tncfire.org/usfln>
- Join and contribute to the FLN listserv
http://tncfire.org/training_listservs
- Contact TNC or agency leads:
Lynn Decker, The Nature Conservancy Fire Initiative ldecker@tnc.org; 801-320-0524
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